

REALITY

July, 1987 - Issue #25

FREE

Review of the Edmonton Atari Computer Hobbyists



ATARI

E.A.C.H.
EDMONTON ATARI COMPUTER HOBBYISTS

Newsletter

E.A.C.H. is an independent non-profit society formed to provide information and support to the Atari users of Edmonton and area. The club meets at 7:15 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month, in room U116 of the Central Services Building at NAIT. See the map on the inside back cover for details.

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Joining E.A.C.H. entitles you to complete access to our extensive public domain software libraries, free classified ads in REACH, a higher level of access on the club BBS, plus REACH will be mailed to you if you miss a meeting.

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Membership fees are \$24 a year for the first two months of the year and are thereafter charged at a rate of \$2 for each month remaining in the year. The membership year runs from January 1 to December 31. Students are charged only 1/2 of the regular rates. To join the group, or for more information on becoming a member, call Maurice Hilarius at 431-0671 or write to him at:

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Edmonton, Alberta
T6C 0X7

This newsletter was produced with an Atari 130 XE, PaperClip from Batteries Included, The Print Shop from Broderbund, and an Epson FX-80 Printer.

MR. ED SPEAKS:

Hello. Welcome to yet another issue of The Incredible Shrinking Newsletter. If you don't like it, please do something about it. Thank you and good night.

-Phil

P.S. Cover by Braun.

ways & woes of 8-bit word pro

by Les Wagar

I began Atari word processing with an 800XL, 1050 disk drive, and an Atariwriter cartridge. When DOS 2.5 came along, I converted everything into enhanced density for the increased disk space, and went merrily on with my cartridge. I have a 130XE now, but I am still using the same old cartridge. That's what this little story is about; you may love your PaperClip or your Atariwriter Plus, but they can't do what I want to do. Only my good old Atariwriter cartridge can.

When I started out, I was printing with an Atari 1025, which suited me well enough until I felt the need for Near Letter Quality performance. I finally decided to upgrade the 1025 to an Epson LX-80 - but then the troubles began to appear. First, the cartridge Atariwriter didn't have a built-in Epson printer driver or a driver-maker, so I decided to upgrade my word processor, too. I tried PaperClip and found, to my surprise, that PaperClip didn't handle enhanced density - only single or double. I would have to reconvert all my data disks to single density, and rebuild my whole filing system. I wrote Batteries Included, and they assured me that they did not have, and were not planning to make, an enhanced density version of PaperClip. So much for PaperClip.

Next I tried Atariwriter Plus. Beautiful!, I thought, when I saw that it had an Epson Driver built in. But when I loaded one of my cartridge-made files, it couldn't handle the size. It could take a file of about 90 sectors, with no room for previewing; but my cartridge-made files were 140-150 sectors long, and still gave me preview space for the 1025. To use Atariwriter Plus I would have to rewrite every sequential word processor file (about 45 of them, by that time) - a "solution" worse than Paperclip had presented me with.

Well, not the only solution, I thought; all I need to do is sell my 800XL, get a 130XE with all that extra space, and I'm home free. Off to the store I went, brought home a 130XE, and

loaded up again. Beautiful!, I thought, I don't have to change a file or a disk. However... it just so happened that I had loaded up a file whose starting page number was 255. A preview printout showed me that the page which followed was not page 256 as I had instructed, but was page 1. The brains who invent word processors had done it again! Although the manual clearly stated that it would paginate to 9999, the programmers had allowed only a one-byte accumulator. It went to 255, and then started over. With that one flaw, Atariwriter Plus turned out to be useless to me. I wrote to Atari, naturally. But Atari responded to me as Atari has always responded to me: with inspirational silence! I returned the program to the store, kept the 130XE, and started looking for a printer driver I could use with my old faithful cartridge.

Fortunately, ANTIC has a Printer Driver Construction Set, which I immediately ordered. It turned out that I didn't need to construct anything. The FX80 driver which they include with it is exactly what my LX80 needs. Of course, I found that the driver takes up some of the space I used to have, so that a few of my former files won't load completely. No problem: I put a one-sector master file on each disk, and chained each file to it. That way, they were read from the disk without loading. Other than adding the chain command, I didn't have to rewrite a file or reorganize a disk.

My usual writing practice now, with the Epson printer, is to install the driver with the cartridge, and write files which are typically 118-122 sectors long - that is, one single-spaced page shorter than my former files - in order to make previewing easier. The moral of the story is: don't throw away those old and easy Atariwriter cartridges. They're still able to go where others can't. As for me, I even bought an extra one (while I could still find one), just to be sure to have old faithful with me for a long, long time.

THE LEACH SQUIRMETH AND BRINGS FORTH...

A NEW LEACH?!!? IS THERE HOPE?

Greetings. My name is George Kosowan. I am the new LEACH (Librarian of the Edmonton ATARI Computer Hobbyists). I joined this fine organization back in April of 1984. I have attended every meeting since then to help satisfy my growing urge to know more about the ATARI 400/800/XL computers. Now 3 years, 1 month and two generations of ATARI computers (XE and ST) later, I have become your new LEACH.

I would like to try to make our public domain (P.D.) library one of the best in Canada and perhaps in North America. I know that Dan Eckert and Adrian Ashley worked extremely hard to bring the library to where it stands today. I know I will keep our good library going with the releases of new public domain software every month.

There are a number of things I would like to do in my term as 8-Bit librarian - one of which is putting out a catalog. At the last meeting I was asked by MANY people for a list of the software in the library. An up-to-date catalog will be released in time. My goal at this time is to get established with the library and to get more software in it to produce an XE (e*X*tra-*E*xcellent) library and catalog.

Software is another factor. I would like to release a lot of disks into the library but no one is really submitting. To make it worth your while, I will give the programs off of one LEACH disk of your choice in exchange for a disk containing P.D. material I can use. This way, I'll be happy, you'll be happy, and you'll save three bucks!!!

Another task of mine is to get in touch with other users' groups and their P.D. libraries. I would like to get involved with the ATARI Computer Enthusiasts (A.C.E.) of Eugene, Oregon, an extremely good user group, and M.A.C.E., another fine group of people to deal with. This group is in Michigan with the same acronym. I am also asking any of you with information on other users' groups I could contact, to pass it along to me. This would benefit us all.

Finally, I would also like to see the club purchase 18 months worth of Antic back issue disks for the library. These disks would be from the years of 1983 and 1984 where all the major 8-bit excitement happened. I am currently looking through these issues to check out the quality of the programs in them. This purchase would cost

the club less than \$100 Canadian in total and, in my opinion, would make the library a great "ATARI resource" for all 8-Bitters.

Well, it's about time for me to mosey along now, but I hope you have thought about what I've said. I surely hope none of those ugly, decaying, ill-looking, bizarre, grotesque, repulsive, wretched, disgusting leaches appear on the page. I guess I am at the mercy of Phil. So tally-ho, adieu, conge, toddle-oo, sianara, and all that jazz. Till next time...

-The Kuel LEACH

*** ** MEETING DEMOS POLICY *** **

*** MODIFIED AS OF JULY 1987 ***

At the June executive meeting it was decided that the club demo policy needed revision. The following policy was formulated.

Any commercial (copyrighted) software used or displayed at E.A.C.H. meetings must be "legitimate". That is, it must have been purchased by the person demoing it, or they must have permission to demo it from the authors/owners. To ensure that this policy can be implemented, the following conditions must be met to demo software at ANY E.A.C.H. official function:

1. The ORIGINAL disks must be used, or,
2. A backup disk may be used with the ORIGINAL manuals in view, or
3. A backup disk may be used with the ORIGINAL proof of purchase.
4. Further, NO "write on disk" operations will be permitted at official club functions, other than updating as approved by the executive (NO COPYING).

This policy may seem slightly Draconian; however, it was felt that it was necessary in order to preserve the reputation of the group (as learned from previous experience and from the experience of other groups).

Please observe this policy! It is in YOUR best interest to do so. The executive will ensure this policy is followed. We remind members that there is a "format disk" policy towards pirated software found at meetings.

YOUR EXECUTIVE



Your Atari Center!

Computers

Atari 1040ST
Atari 520ST
Atari 520STfx
SC1224 color monitor
SM125 monochrome monitor
SF354 single sided drive
SF314 double sided drive
SM804 printer
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Mega STs ... call

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VMS20 modem

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DB Master One
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Soft Logik

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Access

Leader Board
10th Frame

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SwiftCalc ST
DataManager ST

SubLOGIC

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Infocom

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Datasoft

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Firebird

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The Pawn

Activision

Music Studio
Hacker
Hacker 2
Borrowed Time

SSI

Phantasie II
Roadwar 2000

Michtron

TechMate
Karate Kid part II
Cards
GFA BASIC
Cornerman

Psion

Chess

Miles Computing

Harrier Strike Mission

MicroProse

Silent Service

Beckemeyer Development

MT C-Shell

Telarium

Nine Princes in Amber

Academy software

Typing Tutor

Haba

HabaWriter

Psygnosis

Arena
Deep Space

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Ogre
Ultima III

TDI

UCSD Pascal

First Byte

KidTalk
MathTalk
Speller Bee
First Shapes

Gamestar

Two on Two Basketball
GFL football

Unicorn

Fraction Action
Kinderama
Math Wizard
Read & Rhyme
Decimal Dungeon

OmniTrend

Universe II

Progressive Peripherals

Superbase
Logistix

Abacus

PaintPro

Sierra

The Black Cauldron
Donald Duck's Playground
Winnie the Pooh
Kings Quest II
Kings Quest III

Dac software

Dac Easy Accounting

OSS

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Micrgraph

Easy Draw

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PIRACY

THE PROBLEM WITH COMPUTERS

by David Beale

(PLEASE NOTE: This article conveys the opinions of ONE individual - David Beale. They do not IN ANY WAY represent the views of the executive, the membership, or EACH as a whole. And if you didn't know that... now you do.)

There is obviously a continuing problem with software piracy in the computer industry. Many developers are crying the blues, some companies are said to have folded because of it, and the police/courts are apparently unable or unwilling to deal with it. In my opinion, the problem is overblown, and paranoia reigns.

First, a few definitions. Piracy is technically the POSSESSION of a copyrighted program you did not buy. Of course if you give a copy of a program you bought to a friend, then he is guilty since he has it in his possession and did not pay for it. This is apparently not a legal definition in Canada. I am not a lawyer, and this is not a legal opinion, but to the best of my knowledge there has not yet been a final conviction for theft of software. Our laws are very gray in this area, and in most cases the prosecution attempts to get very tricky in order to effect a conviction. The politicians are reluctant to make or pass effective legislation.

What happens if you do pirate a program, does it hurt anybody? Will the police bang down your door to get you? Normally, nobody but you and your friends will know. But what happens to the developer/company distributing the software? Well, your "free" copy will decrease their income. They will look at sales after six months or so and if enough people pirate instead of buy, they will decide the market is poor for that computer and not bother to publish anything else for it. Everybody loses, and you will have made yourself a petty criminal. No big deal, perhaps, but this kind of "small crime" lowers the honesty of society as a whole (others see it and decide it must be OK and do it, then someone goes a bit further and a bit further...). So it seems best not to

pirate, at least from a philosophical view as well as to encourage support for your machine.

In the last issue of REACH there was a sequence of messages from a BBS, allegedly by developers, discussing piracy and what to do about it. In further discussions seen on bulletin boards, I have seen comments alleging Batteries Included went under because they tried to operate without copy protection. Actually, the management of that company admit they got into trouble for other reasons, and that the "no protection" policy was working well.

There are two possible ways to "stop" piracy. If you could make the program uncopyable that would stop it. Alternatively, you could persuade people to pay a reasonable price if they use the software. Let's examine the first method. All you have to do is use software protection to stop piracy right? Uh-uh. Just look at the proliferation of programs/schemes available to defeat copy protection. I use some of them myself to back up my programs. When I pay \$80 or more for a program, there is no way I'm going to run the master disk or wait two weeks for a backup from the US. Take it from me, programs to defeat copy protection work. Publishers could use a ROM in a cartridge (which can be duplicated but requires rather expensive equipment). Unfortunately, cartridges are expensive to produce compared to disks. Well then, obviously, as mentioned in the article last month, hardware protection is the answer. Anybody heard of a hardware disk duplicator? Seems to me like old technology. Remember when the satellite broadcasts started to encode? The mouths of the industry proclaimed the skies would be black within a year. Seems to me only two channels or so are still undecodeable. No matter what protection scheme is used, a method will be found to "break" it within a few months.

Before we examine the other option, let's look at the problem more carefully. Who is doing the pirating? It seems to me only a low percentage of users (less than 10%) will steal a program and use it rather than buying it. About 40% will

PIRACY

try a copy for a few days. If they like it they will buy the program and use it, if they don't like it they will likely keep it but not use it (they don't like it, remember?). About 30%, perhaps more, will buy the program, try it, and if they don't like it try to justify the \$80 they just wasted. Finally, about 20% of the users will pirate the program "for their collection". Oh, they'll run it maybe five or ten times, then go on to the next acquisition. These last types would NEVER buy those programs; they are too busy collecting to actually USE anything. Personally, I have nothing against any of the three types just mentioned. In the real world, you can't categorize people like this anyway, and you will find a blend of all the types in just about everyone. The point is, that (in my opinion) 90% who actually USE a program will pay for it.

So, how can we encourage more to pay for what they use? Start with a good manual, well bound (a la the Atari manual spiral bindings), well laid out with a good index. I will personally pay \$50 - \$80 just for the manual if it's done well! Be careful to charge reasonable prices. A \$300 - \$500 ST program is ridiculous! It had better be able to think for itself at that price! Brings to mind a certain word processor about to be released which shall remain nameless. Provide reasonably priced and timely updates (and not the way a certain spreadsheet was updated). Provide a reasonable user agreement (not like one I saw which in essence said the user agreed they were very lucky to be allowed to use this program, it is for their eyes only, and the supplier is totally irresponsible for anything). Finally, encourage people to pay for what they use, don't force them. Force won't work, as can be seen by the events of the past 10 years. If the software industry organized to develop a campaign I think it would be quite effective. They could also standardize the manual size/format while they were at it (as many IBM products have).

Will we learn the lessons of the past ten years? Will we see a more reasonable attitude by both users and

developers? Only time will tell. One thing is certain though, copy protection will not work, and if we don't learn those lessons, the software selection will not improve, and copy protection will continue to clutter our software.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

A few footnotes to Dave's article... concerning convictions for software piracy, the May issue of CANADA COMPUTES! mentions a conviction, but it concerns a business firm that SOLD pirated software for purported evaluation purposes. I would guess that "non-professional" pirates would be harder to catch and more difficult to convict. We shall see...

Also, I'm not sure I can agree with Dave's percentages. While it's probably true that quite a bit of "piracy" is really done for evaluation purposes, the percentage of users who buy the program is probably much lower, especially in areas such as games. Publishing programs and so on that require manuals and a lot of time and effort to learn are in quite a different position from games, where you can generally just grab the joystick and see what you can do. With most games, even heavy users of the program can get by without a manual, meaning that fewer people will buy it. But somehow I doubt that all of this reasoning is very comforting to the game manufacturers.

However, I do think Dave makes a good distinction between piracy for evaluation's sake and outright theft. I wonder, though, whether the courts will take this distinction into account, or whether the guy who got a copy of his friend's database program to look over will be treated the same as someone with 2000 disks in his collection.

Again, these ramblings are solely my opinion... but there is plenty of room for others! Comments on the BEACH would be appreciated, and I would also welcome any comments from the "official" side of our Atari community (dealers and so on). Rational and realistic discussion only. See ya in the funny papers...

BOP 'N WRESTLE AND TRAILBLAZER

by Eli Tomlinson - JACG

(reprinted with thanks and by permission from the June '87 newsletter of the Jersey Atari Computer Group)

It is always nice to see new software for the Atari computers. It is especially nice when it is as good as Trailblazer. Trailblazer is an excellent arcade game with very well done sound and graphics. And, as for getting your money's worth, it is extremely addictive. The game is a race between what look like two soccer balls. There are 26 tracks, each of which is an obstacle course made up of coloured squares, each with a different attribute. The tracks also have many missing squares where the soccer ball can fall in and cause one to lose valuable time. The object is to complete each track within a certain amount of time, so that you can move to the next course. You must avoid falling in the voids by jumping. You have nine jumps per track, and you can also hit certain colored squares to jump without using your valuable nine jumps.

The program allows you to practice any three tracks, to race alone, against a computer opponent, or with another person. The game is very original, and very well done. Although it doesn't sound like a great idea for a game, it is one of the best arcade games in a long time.

With the good, there is often bad. Bad is being too kind to Bop 'N Wrestle, which will probably end up being much more popular than Trailblazer because of wrestling's popularity. This is also bad because if you bought Bop 'N Wrestle, you might vow never to buy another game by Mindscape.

The idea of Bop 'N Wrestle is simple. You control a wrestler who can fight against a computer wrestler, or another player. My first complaint is that this game takes forever to load. After it reads in what must have been every sector on side one, Bop 'N Wrestle prompted me to turn over the disk. It then seemed to read every sector on side two. The wait is most certainly not worth it.

The game itself is slow, and I felt that I had no control over the wrestler's movements. There are supposed to be a number of different wrestling moves you can use against the opponent. Because there are so many, most are a combination of two joystick actions. Unfortunately, I could almost never do anything but kick the opponent. The movement is very slow and blocky. I found this program to be no fun at all.

If you are still considering purchasing Bop 'N Wrestle, note that it requires 64K, and will use all of the 128K if you have an Atari 130XE. The package warns you that the game is slower with only 64K. I played with Bop 'N Wrestle on a 130XE, so only in my nightmares could I imagine this program on a 64K machine.

If you haven't been to your favorite computer store recently, you might be pleasantly surprised to find that new software has been coming out for the Atari. Some titles are Phantasie and Rebel Charge at Chickamauga by SSI, Midway Battles by TDC Distributors, Gunslinger and 221B Baker Street by Datasoft, Autoduel by Electronic Arts, and The Pawn by Firebird, just to name a few.

*** ACTION DEMO ***

Here is a simple graphic demo written in ACTION! It was converted directly from BASIC in a couple of minutes and it show how easy it is to convert some programs into ACTION!

BYTE I,J

PROC DEMO()

GRAPHICS(9) ;try GRAPHICS(11) as well

```
FOR I=0 TO 39 DO ;change these values for
  FOR J=0 TO 60 DO ;different patterns (max 79)
    COLOR=I+J/4+4
    PLOT(I,79-J) PLOT(J,79-I)
    PLOT(79-J,79-I) PLOT(79-I,79-J)
    PLOT(79-I,J) PLOT(79-J,I)
    PLOT(I,J) PLOT(J,I)
```

OD

OD

DO OD

RETURN

;by Mike E Brown



Western Data Products Supply

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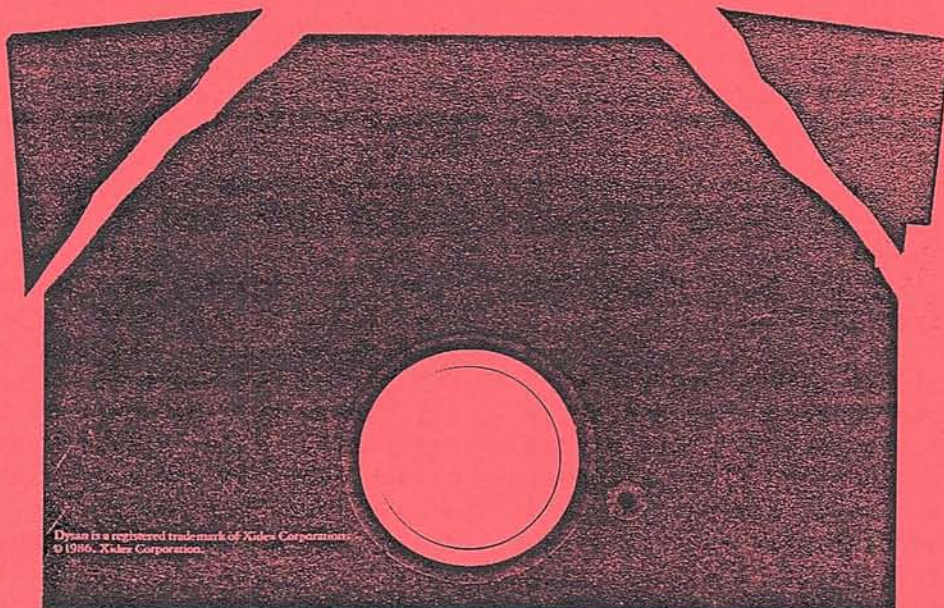
But at Dysan, we think there's something much more important to save. Namely, your data.

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EXPRESS!

8-BIT TELECOMMUNICATION POWER WITHOUT THE PRICE

Express! Telecommunications Software
Review by George Kosowan

In order to completely understand this review, some knowledge of telecommunications on the Atari 8-Bit computer is necessary. Also note that this review is based on the use of 850 revision 3.0 and MPP revision 1.0 of Express!. I have not used the 1030 version since I don't have access to a 1030 modem.

Express! is a series of public domain telecommunications programs written in the ACTION! language by Keith Ledbetter. The ACTION! cartridge is not required to run the program.

There are three different versions of Express!. 850 Express! is for use with Hayes-compatible modems connected to the computer via an Atari 850 Interface or an ICD P:R:Connection. Express! 1030 supports the Atari 1030 modem, the Atari 835 modem, and the newer XM301. And last is the version for MPP/Supra modems called Express! MPP.

To use Express!, you require the proper modem with the proper version of the software (obviously), 48K in your computer, a disk drive, and a low memory DOS. You should reconfigure your DOS to have a LOMEM of around \$2400 or lower. Consult the Express! documentation for the proper setting for Atari DOS 2, DOS 2.5, SmartDOS, SpartaDOS, etc.

One of the first things you see when you boot up the program is a display window on top of the screen. This window stays with you throughout the program. It tells you what duplex you are presently in, the baud rate you're using, the mode you are in (i.e. ATASCII), your remaining buffer space (used for downloading, uploading, captures and so on), and a time clock telling you how much time you have spent on-line. When you boot up, the program also loads in your previously saved program defaults and dial directory. Your defaults are: the colour of the foreground and

background of the screen, the baud rate on the main menu prompt, your default drive, parity setting, left margin, time to connect, and translation mode. The terms "dial directory" and "time to connect" will be explained later in the review.

Express! has many features and is somewhat better than most of the commercial telecommunications software out for the 8-bit. The program has three translation modes. It has your standard ASCII and ATASCII modes, but there is one mode that was just found in one public domain piece of software called RSCOPE. The mode I am talking about is VIDTEX. Yes, with this mode you can go on CompuServe and other on-line services and see on-line hi-resolution pictures on your screen. And with the power of this software, you can save the picture or dump it directly onto the printer. There are also various baud rate to choose from. On the 850 version there are 300, 1200, and 2400 baud operations while the MPP version presents rates of 297, 300, 400, and 450 baud; however, the modem is most commonly used at 300 baud.

One very important feature about Express! that raises it over other modem software is it's dial directory. The directory loads automatically when the program boots up if there is a previously saved list. When you access the directory from the main menu, it displays the names of your most accessed BBSes or on-line services. The dial directory has the ability to store 18 numbers at a time but more can be added by loading other previously made directories. After you select the BBS you want with the control arrows and the return key, the computer dials out automatically, remembering the other system's translation mode, connecting time, baud rate, and three macros. Macros are previously saved pieces of information which could include the log-on name, password, serial number and so on required to log on to a particular system. This feature is great because it means no more memorizing or typing those passwords and account

EXPRESS!

numbers, a faster log-on, and no errors.

The program has built-in DOS utilities that you would find in a regular DOS menu. This means you can format a disk without logging off and going to DOS to format it. Other commands include locking and unlocking disk files, deleting files, doing a directory of a disk, and other common DOS commands.

As you may know, one of the major reasons we log-on to BBSes is to download files. This is where Express! comes in with outstanding results. The file transfer uses XMODEM. In fact, there are two types of XMODEM available but the choice is left to the system you are downloading from. There is your standard file transfer downloading in 128 byte blocks; or a CRC file transfer. In this mode you would receive an error rate of 99.999997% when downloading. But the catch is that the system you are accessing must support CRC file transfers or you are stuck with the 128 byte blocks of transferring files. This is where the choice is left to the service.

Capturing text is another factor involved in the use of telecommunications. If you know that the capture will be small enough for your buffer to hold it all, you can press the select key to start capturing and the start key to save it to a filename. But if the capture you plan to receive is bigger than your buffer, all you have to do is select a file name for the capture from the main menu and the program returns you to terminal mode to start capturing. When the buffer gets full, it saves the capture to disk and appends to that same file the rest of the text you want to capture. You also have the option of viewing the capture presently in the buffer, dumping it to the printer, or clearing captured text out of memory.

Now let's say you're talking to someone on the computer, a SysOp for example, and you want him or her to see a text file you have. Rather than having

to upload it and forcing the SysOp to go to the inconvenience of finding it and so on, you can load the text file into the buffer and display it to the person (as well as to yourself) - much more convenient. There is also a delay rate from 0 to 255 for displaying the text file. This means that the computer will count up to 255 before it displays the next character. This is handy when you want to display the text file without bugging out both persons' eyes from reading the material at high modem speeds of 1200 or 2400 baud. This method of sending text over the modem is something I haven't seen before in any other terminal program.

Here is another scenario. You want to get an upload or download a program to a friend. You are discussing this on the phone by "voice". So do you have to hangup the phone and dial again with the modem, then do the file transfer? The answer is no. Express! has the ability to originate the call while the other modem answers the call or vice versa. This is handy when a person is phoning long distance. You are billed at a higher rate for the first three minutes. You also have to remember that you are billed for the first three minutes whether you use them or not. So you can save yourself paying senseless long distance bills with a program that is public domain (free).

Another good feature of this program is that you can tell the program when to hang up the phone. This is particularly useful when you have a modem that doesn't have an internal speaker, meaning that you don't know if the service you are trying to access is busy or not. With this time to connect feature you can tell the program to disconnect the modem after 15 seconds or so, if it doesn't receive a carrier from the other modem. This saves the user a needless wait.

Other miscellaneous features of Express! is that it works with the R-Time 8 Cartridge from ICD for a real time clock, word wrap, and the setting of your

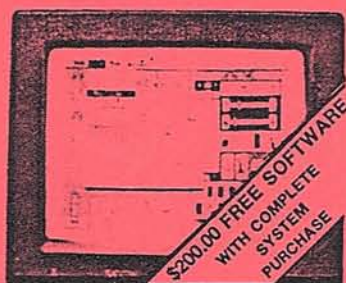
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EXPRESS!

left margin. There is also an option in Express! to select a text window in terminal mode. You type in this little window then press the return key. The text you type zooms across the screen. I assume this feature is suppose to be used for on-line conferencing and to send information over bad phone connections. This can also freak out your friends especially at a modem speed like 2400 baud.

The ATR8000 is also supported by the 850 Express! program. All you have to do is append 850 Express! to your auto-boot routine for the ATR8000 handler and away you go.

In conclusion, I feel Express! is the most sophisticated piece of telecommunications software for the 8-bit today in both the public domain and the commercial software markets. This program really shows the powerful ACTION! language at work for the 8-Bit Atari. Actually, this terminal program is so powerful that it would seem putting it in the public domain would be unwise. The program should be distributed commercially because the program is so well written. My opinion is that Keith Ledbetter had his reasons to release it into the public domain. Lately people are advertising their software by releasing beta versions before the final release of the program. This is a cheap way to advertise and to show what the program can do. I'm betting that this is no exception, that Keith Ledbetter released it to help advertise BBS Express! (a BBS program for the 8-bit). Well, that's my theory on the subject. In any case, the program is really good and is available from the club's 8-Bit P.D. library for only three dollars. It is marked Telecommunication Utility Disk number three. This disk contains all three versions of Express! with documentation. So, come on down and pick up the best P.D. telecommunications program that was ever released for the Atari 8-Bit.

FAST

A DESK ACCESSORY

(reprinted with thanks and by permission from the May 1987 BYTOWN BYTES, the newsletter of the National Capital Atari Users' Group)

This is being written using Easy-Draw; well, not really, rather I'm using FAST from within Easy-Draw. Both programs are by Migraph. To be more precise I'm using the ST-Editor of FAST. With the push of a function key, I can drop back to the Easy-Draw drawing screen and pick up on my drawing. By pressing F2 from the FAST window, I go back to the editor and the text I was working on.

FAST takes up one desk accessory, but it provides seven functions. One of these, ST-Editor, is a non-Gem screen editor which has a list of 50 keyboard driven commands. Included is a macro capability which allows pretyping of often used expressions and insertion into a document with an Alternate-key sequence. I wouldn't normally use the accessory to edit long text, as the whole text to the next carriage return is redrawn with each keystroke. (More on this later.) The second major function of FAST is ST-DOS which gives you back the desktop functions lost when you booted your disk. Don't have a formatted disk to save your Easy-Draw masterpiece? No problem - FAST offers four 3-1/2" disk formats and two 5-1/4" formats. It can copy files or disks, delete, erase, change directories, set the date, time and an alarm, print files and several other functions. Disk to disk copies require two drives or a lot of disk swapping. The third major function is a card index for names, addresses, and phone numbers. These are easy to create, view, print, or create labels from. Clicking the right box is supposed to allow you to autodial the telephone - it didn't work in the version I received. (Accessories are designed to allow you to interrupt your work for short term tasks. Personally, I want to see a simple modem accessory

FAST

to allow the checking of electronic mail. This must be a terrific programming problem, since there aren't any. (Hint, hint.) The four other functions are: clock with a single alarm, calendar, 4 function calculator and an ASCII table. FAST will give a printout of a 12 month calendar, but surprisingly I couldn't find a way to print out a text file from within FAST.

This part of the text is being written from within VIP-Gem and for some reason the cursor action is much faster. Apparently the working surface of VIP uses 3 windows as only one FAST window can be opened, if I'm to believe the ST owner's manual which says only 4 open windows at a time. On the other hand I can have 6 visible windows in Easy-Draw. An attempt to open a second FAST window in VIP brings up a message saying no more windows are available.

The FAST manual is 98 pages long, the index 10 pages, well printed and well written. Would all manuals be of this quality - there are some typos, but nothing fatal. There is also a two-sided card for the dos and editor commands. The disk is not copy protected. As if we didn't know from Easy-Draw, Migraph puts out a quality product.

Do you need FAST? Try this: copy BICALC2 from the NCAUG ST disk "Desktop", NEWWORD from disk #14, MINIDOS from the faSTER disk magazine #5 (it's noted therein as a public domain program and may show up elsewhere). This set of accessories will mimic the capabilities of FAST. Why pay for FAST? FAST worked with all the programs I tried, and other than the phone dialing, it consistently worked well. The public domain ones did not, but they are worth a try with your favorite. As mentioned above, you also get complete and clear documentation with FAST. There are other commercial accessory programs you might look at if this sort of thing fulfills your needs: Cornerman,

Macromanager and Backpack. Hey Amiga, who needs multitasking when we have all this at the touch of a mouse?

P.S. Wow!

After writing the article, I dropped over to our Editor's house to pick up the new format instructions for Bytown Bytes articles. Lo and behold, sitting on his shelf waiting for review, was the new desktop publishing version of Easy-Draw. Sensing a good probability of synergy between these two new products from Migraph, and after making a fool of myself, I left with the latest version of this popular product. Copying the master disk and FAST onto a 820k disk (formatted under FAST) and booting, I find a new reason to own both products. The new Easy-Draw lets you import text into a column and direct overflow into a new column. Since the FAST ST-Editor doesn't use wordwrap or insert carriage returns at the end of a line, it perfectly suits the format needed by desktop publishing. Yes, I tried it with Publishing Partner, and it works there too, but with some minor compatibility problems which Migraph may want to clear up. I now faced a large problem: I had to do a major re-edit of this article to include this new information. You can't load a straight ascii file into 1ST-WORD as it simply runs off the screen into never-never land. After much casting about I find this does not happen with Regent Word II - some more good news.

If you spend a lot of time with Easy-Draw, Publishing Partner, or VIP, I recommend that you take a close look at FAST. Say Bob, I know you're busy with Bytown Bytes, so would you like me to review Easy-Draw?

- Wayne Longman

THE MAP

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Meetings begin at 7:15 PM on the
first Tuesday of E.A.C.H. Month.

ST SIG Meetings in A121 on the
following Wednesday.

PRINCESS

ELIZABETH

WHAT'S HAPPENING

ST SIG MEETING: July 15

The next meeting of the ST Special Interest Group will be held Wednesday, July 15 at 7:00 in room A121 of the Central Services Building at NAIT (see map on inside back cover). Call Lawrence Rozak (462-1526) or Keven Whitham (456-0077) for more details.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: July 22

Please get your articles or advertisements to the editor before July 22. We need YOU! Upload your article to the BBS, mail it to the address on the inside front cover, or give the editor a call (Phil, 477-3671).

GENERAL MEETING: August 4

The next general meeting of the Edmonton Atari Computer Hobbyists is August 4 at 7:15 p.m. in room U116 of the Central Services Building at NAIT (see map on inside back cover). Bring goodies to swap, software to demo, computers to use, and then... get down! See you there!

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